

ing. To make our meaning clear, the next time you hear a public prayer imagine that the address is intended for you, that the suppliant is asking you for a favor. Note how his manner, tone, circumlocution, lengthy elaboration, formal and stilted style affects you. Observe the atmosphere of incredulity and hopelessness which permeates the performance. Observe also how much the piece is intended for the ears of other listeners beside the one to whom it is addressed. If it happens to be an average sort of prayer your emotions will probably be mixed. You will not know whether to laugh or to be angry. How pitiful, perhaps how contemptible in God's sight must be many an eloquently worded prayer. Behind what gorgeous curtains of rhetoric men hide their unbelief. With what heaps of words we try to convince God that we trust him. With what impudent presumption we labor to enlighten the Infinite Intelligence on a great variety of subjects, or advise the Infinite Wisdom concerning many intricate problems. All these absurdities are not the outgrowth of that faith which the act of prayer implies. They are the outgrowth of unbelief, or ignorance, or vanity, or all three together. Faith is direct. It has an absorbing consciousness of two facts, first, what it needs; second, where and by whom that need can be supplied. The request of a little child is a model prayer. Look at that hungry little fellow running into the house and asking his mother for a piece of bread, the absolute certainty that he is going to get it ringing in the tones of his voice, shining in every feature and articulate in every gesture. That is prayer, and it is the kind that wins with God. In several respects Christians may profit by becoming "as a little child."

A Slice of Responsibility

Every atom of power of any kind represents just so much responsibility. Our brain power, whether in larger or lesser degree, which may be exerted for evil or good, our moral power, or the influence either beneficent or pernicious which we exert upon the character and conduct of others, the possession of wealth, which enlarges the range of our personal force and the opportunities for its exercise, all these suggest a weight of responsibility which appals the serious mind. Upon the part of Christians this responsibility is increased by the distinct undertaking to advance the cause of righteousness. If I contract to do a certain thing, that engagement argues a much more specific and direct responsibility than merely my *fitness* to do that work. I engage my honor, my integrity; and if I am acting in any sort as the agent of another, my responsibility is increased by all the sanctions of his character and honor. If these are true considerations,

if this is an accurate estimate of our personal responsibility, how can a Christian waste, or put to a bad use, or employ for selfish ends, either time or property? How can he waste his opportunities, or how neglect to press with all his faculties into every avenue of usefulness?

If personal responsibility can be classified preferentially, we would say that Christians are responsible; first, for the moral influence exerted in their families; secondly, in the church to which they belong; thirdly, in the community in which they live; and fourthly, upon society in general. In all these important spheres they are bound by every law of truth and honor, by every claim which God's love and mercy has upon them, and by every hope of the divine approval at the last day, to withstand and combat to the uttermost every agency and influence of evil. If this standard of practical righteousness was lived up to by all church members, there would be no saloon, no gambling dens, no garbage newspapers, less poverty, less suffering, less Sabbath breaking, less war. The church would soon become so mighty, so aggressive, so effectually armed and equipped with all the agencies of extension, that the powers of darkness would be compelled to retire in defeat and confusion. What a different face would be put upon all the work of the church if our educational, publishing and missionary boards had all the material support which would flow to them were every member discharging the full measure of his responsibility.

It would be an interesting table of statistics to have before our eyes, with mathematical exactness, the percentage of Christian professors who are living up to the standard of their duty. There is only one instance in history where this particular class of information was tabulated in mathematical terms. In a numerous community there were not fifty righteous? nor forty? nor thirty? nor twenty? nor ten? Suppose the same test were applied to our churches. In that membership of one hundred, are there fifty who are discharging their whole duty, living up to the full measure of their responsibility? Are there forty? or thirty? or twenty? or ten? or five? or one? Can you stand the test? Can I?

What is the trouble, and the remedy? There is a particular species of potter's clay which has a will and a conscience of its own. Its will is naturally and instinctively perverse, so that it will squirm in the hands of the potter, complain of his harsh treatment, and refuse to go down freely into the mould. Do you wonder that the potter, be he ever so patient and skillful, is unable to make of this refractory clay many useful and beautiful vessels? Behold, thou art this clay. The lesson of entire surrender, of unhesitating

consecration, is what we need to learn. We do not dream what wonderful things God can do in us and with us but for these stubborn wills of ours, this persevering instinct of resistance and rebellion and distrust which characterizes our halting, our crippled and barren spiritual life.

Which?

Is your religion negative or positive? Do you look upon it as a sort of policy against the commission of sin, a locked door between you and the forbidden fruit, a strong arm to hold back your vigorous and perhaps struggling tendency toward indulgence, a very high fence to keep you in the narrow way?

Or is your religion a constant incentive to loving service; a call to helpfulness wherever need shows; a timely lift, an encouraging word, the mending of a way, the shining of a light, a message of cheer, a beacon of hope, a friend, advocate and champion of every cause of practical righteousness?

Are you merely trying to keep from sliding down, or are you struggling to climb up?

Is it your idea that religion is intended for the salvation of your soul; or for some millions of others as well, an end to which you may contribute?

Will a totally selfish salvation be regarded as a very beautiful one?

A Strange Mixture

It is an inexplicable problem, this mixture of good and evil in human nature, in human experience, in everything, it appears, which pertains to this world. Other problems of a like nature also press for a solution which perhaps eternity alone will reveal, for example; why there should be any evil at all; what good can come of it; why it should enter into the scheme of the universe; what ultimate blessing growing out of it will compensate for the long record of its agony, its ruin and despair? It is impossible in our limited intelligence and our limited scope of observation to reconcile the existence of evil with the idea of Infinite Love and Infinite Power, unless it be upon the hypothesis that an ultimate good will ensue, so vast, so universal and so beneficent, that all the centuries of pain and horror will be more than justified. It is inconceivable also that there should be anything like an ultimate triumph of evil, either great or small. A partial victory of love would be no victory at all. "All things must be gathered together in Christ, both in heaven and in earth," and then "God must be all in all." This is the beautiful vision which gives us strength and inspiration to struggle on against the evil, no matter how insolently aggressive it is, or how dominant and triumphant it appears to be. We cannot despair until we abandon our faith in God, or substitute for the God revealed in Christ that other god to whom indescribable